

## Keep that hot air coming

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Like giant candy colored Christmas tree ornaments, hot-air balloons will festoon the skies above Park City this weekend during the sixth annual Autumn Aloft festivities at Park Meadows Golf Course, 1200 Little Kate Road. More than 2 dozen balloonists from throughout the United States are participating in a variety of competitive aerial events, with such unusual titles as the hare and hound,

splash and dash and key grab. In addition to the balloons, an F-16 fly-by was scheduled at 7 a.m. Saturday; a 5-kilometer run and walk will start at 9 a.m. at Prospector Square Hotel; and the 18th annual Rugby Challenge Cup will be held Saturday and Sunday at City Park. In addition, a variety of helicopters will be on display Saturday from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. in Albertson's parking lot. (Story on Page B1.)

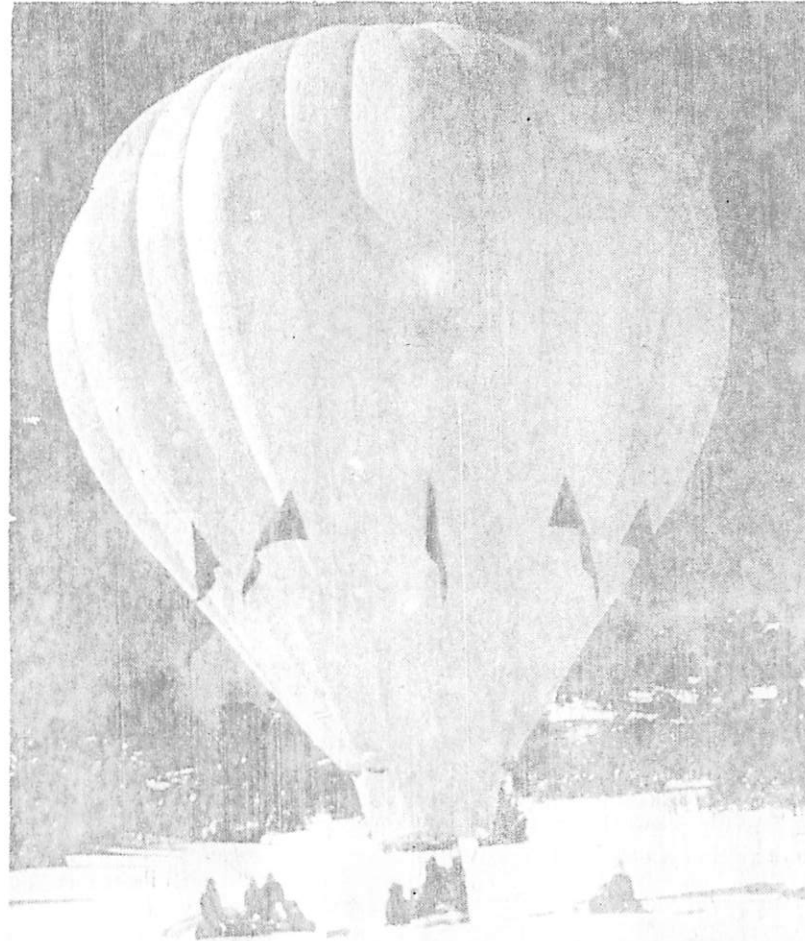


PHOTOGRAPHY / GARY MCKELLAR





# Ground Needed For Balloon Port



Colorful, quiet, clean balloons could regularly float in the skies over the Heber Valley, if a new balloon port proposal succeeds.

A proposed Heber Valley balloon port, "Balloon Port Utah," could draw balloonists from all over Utah and further. The first problem is to find a site.

Charlie Brown, supported in his

project by the Heber Valley Chamber of Commerce, said he is looking for about ten acres for the port. There isn't any construction involved — all that's needed is a couple of garbage cans, he said. He as-

sured that balloonists are traditionally good at cleaning up after themselves and that the sport doesn't cause any severe damage to the land.

He said it "brought down the house" when he suggested the idea of a balloon port in the Valley during a recent meeting of balloonists, the Utah Aeronauts, at The Homestead. He explained that balloons can't enter the air space within five miles of the two airports in Salt Lake, but the control at the Heber airport extends only two miles. The beautiful scenery and the wind patterns in the Valley make it ideal for the sport, he said.

One possibility for a site, he said, would be to use some ground where the landowners have leased their water rights and their ground is sitting idle anyway. Another would be to use state-owned land near Deer Creek Reservoir, he said.

A balloon event is already scheduled in Heber Valley for May 13, and Brown said he'd appreciate someone donating or leasing a site for just the one day, a year, or on a reasonable, renewable lease. Any donations would provide tax advantages because the events will be sponsored by a non-profit organization.

Although the Utah Aeronauts may be the sponsors, Brown is also thinking about organizing a local non-profit corporation for balloonists. One reason is that, since a balloon port could be an attention-getting draw for the Valley, he also intends to tie in other Heber Valley promotions. He's working on de-

signing T-shirts, and other items promoting "Heber Valley U.S.A.," with the logo "Utah Flies," featuring everything in the Valley, from sailplanes to fly-fishing.

Another of Brown's promotion ideas, if a local organization is created, is to offer free memberships, which would include discounts at local businesses for such items as propane, food, supplies and motel rooms. That would not only bring people to the Valley, it would encourage them to stay awhile, he said.

Although Park City is considered a balloon capitol, Brown said it is mostly used by commercial groups. He said Heber Valley could draw private, recreational balloonists without taking anything away from Park City.

Ballooning is a year-round sport and people could be expected to fly weekends and holidays. Brown said the local port would probably be used only 20 to 30 weekends a year at first. However, he expects five or six balloons to fly almost every weekend and eventually for spectators to begin showing up. He said any holiday is a good excuse for balloonists to fly — all they need is a decent day.

Brown is a semi-retired electronics technician. He and his wife, Ann, moved from Albuquerque to Midway in October for "easier living" and to be close to his family in Wasatch County. Although, he isn't a balloonist himself, he has enjoyed working with them for about 15 years.